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STATE FOR G: U/S DOBRIANSKY, OES: A/S MCMURRAY  
STATE ALSO FOR OES/ENV, OES/GC, EUR, EUR/WE  
WHITE HOUSE FOR CEQ CHAIRMAN CONNAUGHTON  
EPA FOR CHIEF STAFF INGEBRETSON, OIA: ASS'T ADMINISTRATOR AYRES  
DOE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE TECHNOLOGY OFFICE, ATTN: RMARLAY

E.O. 12356: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [TRGY](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: EPA ADMINISTRATOR BROADENS FOOTPRINT OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
TALKS WITH FRENCH

¶1. Summary: Environmental Protection Administrator Johnson engaged in public outreach and bilateral talks in Paris, May 16-17, in addition to OECD meetings (septel). In these events, the Administrator presented the range of U.S. environmental efforts, including innovative practices and new measures, such as those controlling mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants. While energy efficiency was a major theme in bilateral discussions with French Ecology Minister Olin, French officials made no reference to U.S. non-accession to the Kyoto Protocol. Olin raised - as she had with Ambassador Stapleton earlier in the year - concerns about the U.S. position on replenishment of the Global Environmental Facility. Of particular note, Olin said that the French government no longer planned to push for the creation of a 'United Nations Environmental Organization' a la WTO. However, she said France would seek other ways to engage senior levels in the United Nations system on environmental topics. She asked whether the U.S. might be interested in discussing how best to accomplish this. End Summary.

¶2. On May 17, Administrator Johnson, his delegation (Acting Assistant Administrator Hazen, Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances, Chief of Staff Ingebretson, Public Affairs Officer Lybbert, and Program Manager for Europe Phillips) and Embassy ESTH Counselor met with Ecology and Sustainable Development Minister Nelly Olin, and a delegation composed of her senior staff and Foreign Ministry officials, including France's Ambassador-at-Large for the Environment Gauer. This meeting constituted the first broad bilateral exchange the two cabinet-level environment entities had undertaken in several years. On May 16, Johnson also made a presentation - attended by Ambassador Stapleton -- at France's prestigious Sustainable Development Institute ('Institut du developpement durable et des relations internationales' or 'IDDRI'); met with the press; discussed approaches to environmental outreach in France with the Ambassador; and was the guest of honor at a reception hosted by DCM.

¶3. In the Johnson-Olin meeting, both principals noted they face similar realities, not only the nature of environmental challenges, but also budget constraints. By way of example, Olin mentioned a legislative priority for the French government, a new water bill and the need to update hydrological systems in France. The two officials agreed to the need for innovative solutions to problems and to the sharing of information and best practices in the environmental domain. The French side spoke highly of the existing relationship with EPA, especially visits to and the sharing of information about clean-up of contaminated ('superfund') sites. The French side re-raised - as Olin had in an earlier discussion with the Ambassador - the idea of an exchange of civil service environmental personnel. In that regard, Olin said an exchange with

the UK had been especially successful. Administrator Johnson responded that the U.S. would be pleased to consider this further, particularly if what was contemplated was short-term exchanges. The Administrator also invited the Minister to Washington for discussions on environmental topics and environmental site visits. In that regard, the Administrator briefed Olin on EPA's 'brownfields' program. Schedule permitting, Olin replied that she would be delighted to accept the EPA offer.

14. Johnson highlighted several areas of EPA work. These included "very aggressive" efforts to implement the President's initiative on clean, renewable fuels and the EPA's 'Climate Leaders' and 'Energy Star' programs, as well as a number of U.S.- led international partnerships including 'Methane to Markets' and the 'Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Energy and Development.' Emphasizing the importance of technology, the Administrator spoke of the 'FutureGen' goal of a zero-emission, coal-fired power plant. Olin shared the French government's goal to drive down greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by a factor of four, well below the 1990 level of such emissions. To do this, she said, will require much effort. Urban renewal presented an area for intensive work. Accordingly, the French government plans to seek additional fiscal incentives to promote energy efficiency in buildings and dwellings. Similarly, Olin said that developing energy-efficient, clean cars was also a priority and she noted that as of May 10 new cars sold in France by law displayed not only average mileage information, but also annual average emissions of GHGs. The Administrator noted that the U.S. leads the world in hybrid vehicles on the road and the U.S. was developing hydrogen as an energy source for cars of the future. Olin said that France could do more to promote cleaner cars, but was "catching up." Peugeot-Citroen, she mentioned, were partnering to develop a hybrid car and the government was considering the imposition of higher taxes on larger cylinder capacity vehicles, such as 4X4's.

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15. Following a discussion by both senior environmental officials about the increasing importance of water and regulation of mercury pollution, domestically and internationally, Olin expressed her concern that the U.S.'s proposed contribution to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was substantially less than in previous replenishments and that unless remedied, this could prove to be "a disaster" for developing countries implementing environmental projects. While recognizing the important work of GEF, ESTH Counselor responded that one of the U.S. concerns - and something the U.S. Treasury has underscored in the replenishment negotiations - is that GEF needs to meet standards of accountability and transparency expected of an international financial institution. Olin continued that the international environmental framework needs to be strengthened, particularly the United Nations Environment Program. That said, and despite support by a number of European countries, France has decided no longer to push for the creation of a new world environmental body. Olin thought perhaps a working group might be able to develop ideas to address common concerns. Such a group might also determine ways in which to assure environmental concerns are taken up by higher levels in the United Nations. She asked whether the U.S. might be interested in exploring ideas on how to accomplish this.

16. Comment: In recent years, many in France have criticized the U.S. for not acceding to the Kyoto Protocol. This criticism has occasionally degenerated into a negative stereotype of the United States. For instance, we've seen references to the U.S. as "the Great Polluter" or "SUV Heaven." At each of his events in Paris, the Administrator not only vigorously presented the results-oriented, technology-driven U.S. climate change policy, but also the range of work underway at EPA. The Administrator's visit fit squarely with our public outreach goals to reverse the U.S. stereotype. We very much appreciate the Administrator's willingness to engage the French and look forward to EPA's assistance in continuing the dialogue with France on environmental stewardship. End Comment.

STAPLETON